

**MINUTES**  
**Underhill Conservation Commission**  
**December 9, 2019**  
**Underhill Town Hall**

Present: Karen McKnight, Betsy Chapek, Laurie Graham, Pat Lamphere, Peter Hiskes, Dan Steinbauer, Nancy McRae, Amy Golodetz, Steven Webster

Guests: David Demarest

Absent: Daphne Tanis

Welcome and Opening Remarks: Karen welcomed all and led meeting.

Public Comment: End of the meeting.

Approval Minutes: 11/11/19 Meeting Minutes tabled until next meeting.

Time: 6:30pm - 8:10pm

**Natural Resources Town Plan Updates**

- Background section (Page 4) says that the Town of Underhill “staddles” Champlain Valley/Green Mountains, suggested new wording to “spans” or “is situated between Champlain Valley and Green Mountains.”
- Historical / Cultural Resources connection to Natural Resources sections.
- Goal: Specific, timely, attainable, measurable.  
Policies: What we are going to do.  
Strategies: How we are going to do it.
- Compared with wording with other towns, Brattleboro and Huntington town plans. Brattleboro has a goal to “protect and enhance ecological integrity”

**Original Goal Section**

- GOAL 1:** Encourage participation, education and appreciation of Underhill’s natural resources.
- GOAL 2:** Ensure responsible stewardship and sustainable use of natural resources in Underhill.
- GOAL 3:** Preserve natural features in Underhill that contribute to ecological health and biological diversity.
- GOAL 4:** Support Underhill’s rural character, conserved natural areas, scenic landscape, working farms, managed forests, and cultural heritage.

**Suggested Changes:**

**Goal 1 (was 2):** Ensure responsible stewardship and sustainable use of natural resources in Underhill.

**Goal 2 (was 3):** Protect (instead of Preserve) natural features in Underhill that contribute to ecological health and biological diversity.

**Goal 3 (was 4):** Support Underhill’s rural character, conserved natural areas, scenic landscape, working farms, managed forests, and cultural heritage.

*Thoughts: Cultural Heritage is not addressed later in the document. Reduce impact on Climate Change should be added as a goal (#5).*

**Goal 4 (was 1):** Encourage participation, education and appreciation of Underhill’s natural resources.

*Thoughts: How will we know if we have met the goal of “appreciation.” How will we evaluate participation- should we assume a connection between providing educational events, attendance, and appreciation?*

**Goal 5 (new):** Facilitate a healthy and diverse ecosystem capable of handling challenges associated with climate change and encourage renewable energy. (Wording suggested by David Demarest following conversation on how to incorporate climate change into goals.)

**Policies/Strategies:**

- Policy 1 Strategy1.5: “Logging does not create a flood hazard” - State regulates runoff around logging. Clarify why logging is in this section.

- Policy 2: Suggested Change Policy title to 'Manage forest land to maintain and improve forest blocks and habitat connectors,' to explicitly state the importance of contiguous forest blocks related to Act 171 and mapping work. Include similar language from the wetland section in a new Strategy, 2.5, "Purchase and Acquire Easements to protect and encourage continuous forest blocks."
- Policy 3 remove the word "improper" in regards to development in the policy. Remove strategy 3.4, combine strategies 3.3. And 3.5 to read, "classify steep slopes by considering the degree of steepness, soil types and accessibility and review and update steep slope regulations."

#### Natural Resources Sub Committee

- Amy will be applying for a grant for Conservation Commission Association to help with mapping cost.
- Sandy Wilmot reached out in October to put goal together for sub committee's work.

#### Education Series

- Betsy has been in touch with Deborah Rawson Library to work to publicly show environmentally-focused movies that are uplifting, entertaining, educational. The library will help with publicity and licensure for public showings that will happen at the Town Hall. Movie suggestions include, 'Rivers and Tides' by Andrew Goldsworthy, The Final Straw 'Food Earth Happiness' and 'The Biggest Little Farm' 'Fantastic Fungi' - Could show just one, or do a series.
- Andrea Shortlee Wildlife Biologist is not doing any outreach at this time.
- Kim Royer presentation on coyote specialist would be happy to present. Tentative dates of either Tuesday or Wednesday March 24 or 25.
- Living with Beavers presentation with state specialist Chris Bernier in February. About an hour and a half. Tentative date of February 13.

#### Streambank Stabilization

- Stream bank along New Road contains knotweed and is at risk for erosion. With current snowmelt, we could stabilize stream as early as this week. 4 inch minus crushed stone with textile landscaping cloth would be best, but just stone will work. Deciding whether this is a temporary fix or long term? Karen will contact Nate at the Highway Dept. to see if they could help with the stone before it snows again. Steve is able to meet Nate to show him where we would need the stone.

#### Items for January Meeting

- Create a plan for purchase of bushes/trees for Plant Sale. Locally grown, ensure that we avoid jumping earthworms.
- Update on the Tomasi Meadow fundraising project

#### Public Comment

- David Demarest advocates for public comments throughout the meeting.
- David Demarest asks for an update on spraying Japanese Knotweed; Karen McKnight responds that there is no update on knotweed spraying at this time.

Meeting again next Monday Dec. 16, 2019, Karen will warn this second meeting.

The goal of this meeting will be to focus on Natural Resources Section of the Town Plan. We will also review 11/11/19 Meeting Minutes.

Minutes Approved 12/16/19